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12 June 1979

ALERT MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM FOR: The National Security Council

SUBJECT: Marxist Threat to Somoza in Nicaragua

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The Marxist-led Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) is waging an active guerrilla warfare campaign against the regime of Anastasio Somoza with logistical support from Cuba and Panama. The National Guard has been stretched thin by FSLN attacks and ambushes in outlying cities and the capital city of Managua. Although Somoza may be able to hold on to power for a short time, the economy is at a standstill and the FSLN is steadily gaining strength and popularity. The possibility of an eventual FSLN victory looms large.

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The ranks of the relatively small FSLN guerrillas have been swelled by the support of anti-Somoza activists who do not necessarily share the Marxist ideology of the FSLN. Their combined strength is between 3,000 to 4,000 with more joining daily. Total GN strength is about 10,000. The GN has been hard pressed by guerrilla ambushes for a month and has operated at a disadvantage because the guerrillas control the time, place, and intensity of attack. Nevertheless, the GN, with its superior weapons and training, is still holding its own. As yet, there is no evidence that its loyalty to President Somoza is wavering. [REDACTED]

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While Somoza may be able to hold on, if the FSLN continues to receive supplies and reinforcements and to conduct hit-and-run attacks in isolated localities, GN capabilities could be stretched to the breaking point. Faced with this eventuality, Somoza might appeal to neighboring Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras for assistance. These countries, particularly Guatemala, may provide such support if they believed the FSLN were about to seize power. [REDACTED]

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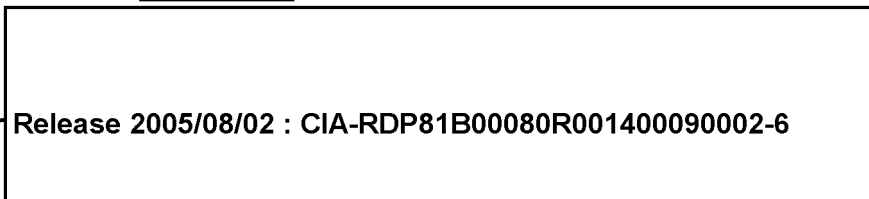
If this major effort by the FSLN to oust Somoza nevertheless proves successful, opposition elements would probably try to form a coalition government and eventually hold elections. It is unlikely that these will lead to a stable representative government, however, because, isolated from the democratic process and institutions for over 40 years, many Nicaraguans are united only by their determination to get rid of Somoza, and individual opposition leaders or factions are weak. Under these circumstances, the FSLN may then assert itself and begin to form a Marxist-oriented government with Cuban help. [REDACTED]

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If the GN should break down and Somoza leave the scene, there is likely to be a period of chaos in which the population will exact retribution from those who supported or benefited from the Somoza regime. US citizens and installations may be targets for such attacks. Nonofficial US citizens in Nicaragua total 3,000-4,000. Should the evacuation of all US officials and residents prove necessary, they could probably get out to neighboring countries or the United States by road or air. [REDACTED]

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

12 June 1979

ALERT MEMORANDUM*

Marxist Threat to Somoza in Nicaragua

The Marxist-led Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) is waging an active guerrilla warfare campaign against the regime of Anastasio Somoza with logistical support from Cuba and Panama. The National Guard has been stretched thin by FSLN attacks and ambushes in outlying cities and the capital city of Managua. Although Somoza may be able to hold on to power for a short time, the economy is at a standstill and the FSLN is steadily gaining strength and popularity. The possibility of an eventual FSLN victory looms large.

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The recent attacks by the Marxist-led FSLN guerrillas are designed to draw the Nicaraguan National Guard (GN) into combat in widely separated regions of the country

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ension is increased by the general strike called by the FSLN, which is about 80 percent effective, in part due to fear of retaliation from the FSLN.

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A large segment of the GN moved south to repel the invasion by the FSLN, which has been supplied with weapons, equipment, and ammunition from countries supporting the FSLN, including Cuba.

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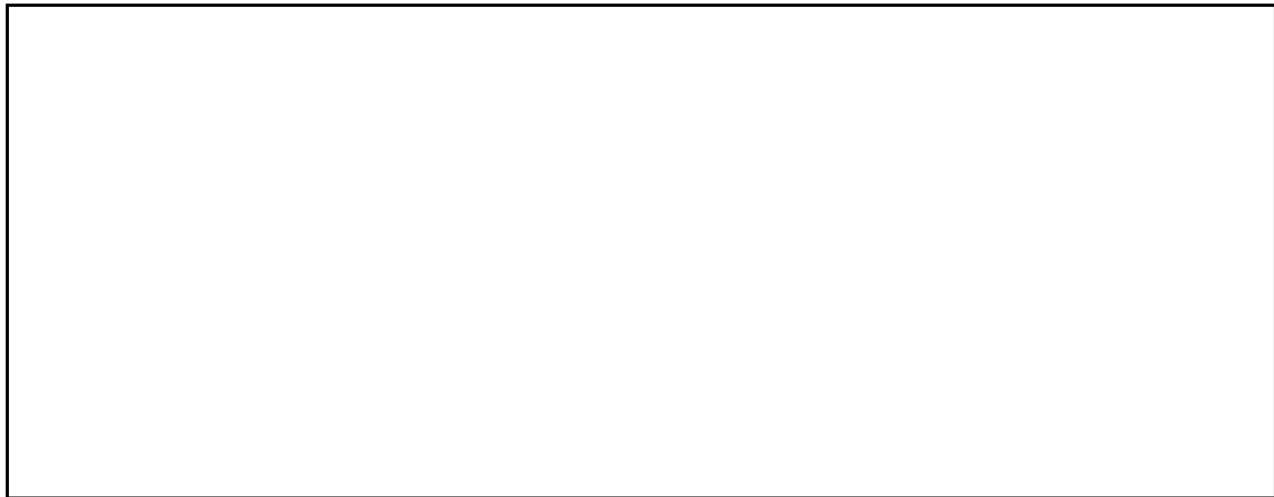
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